

A Species at Risk

Numbers of Guadalupe bass have declined dramatically in recent years. This is partly due to changes in habitat. After eons of adapting to its stream environment, our state fish is at a disadvantage in modern-day reservoirs and in streams with diminished flow. However, the greatest threat to its continued existence is hybridization with the introduced smallmouth bass.

In 1974, TPWD began stocking smallmouth bass in the Edwards Plateau region with the goal of improving fishing in Central Texas streams and reservoirs. This stocking program had an unforeseen result: the two species crossed, producing hybrids that threatened to displace native populations.

In 1992, TPWD launched a pilot program to restore native populations. Pure Guadalupe bass have been stocked annually into Johnson Creek, a 15-mile-long tributary of the Guadalupe River; in an effort to displace smallmouth-Guadalupe hybrids and restore dominance of the native species. Based on the success of this program, TPWD is now working with fly-fishing enthusiasts and the Upper Guadalupe River Authority to expand the stocking program throughout the Guadalupe River and, eventually, throughout the Hill Country. With a long-term commitment to this program, we are confident that we will succeed in restoring and protecting the State Fish of Texas—the Guadalupe bass.

Fishing Tips and Regulations

The Guadalupe bass has long provided a popular sport fishery in the Texas Hill Country, particularly for those anglers who emphasize quality of the experience over quantity of the catch. The agile, fast-water Guadalupe bass provides hours of fun for people who enjoy fishing in one of the most beautiful parts of Texas.

As a protected game fish, the Guadalupe bass can be caught only with pole and line. Many anglers practice catch-and-release, but limited harvest is allowed. The daily bag limit for Guadalupe bass is the same as for the other black basses (largemouth, smallmouth and spotted) at five fish per day, but there is no minimum length limit for Guadalupe bass.

Special regulations apply at Lost Maples State Natural Area, where all black basses are catch-and-release only.



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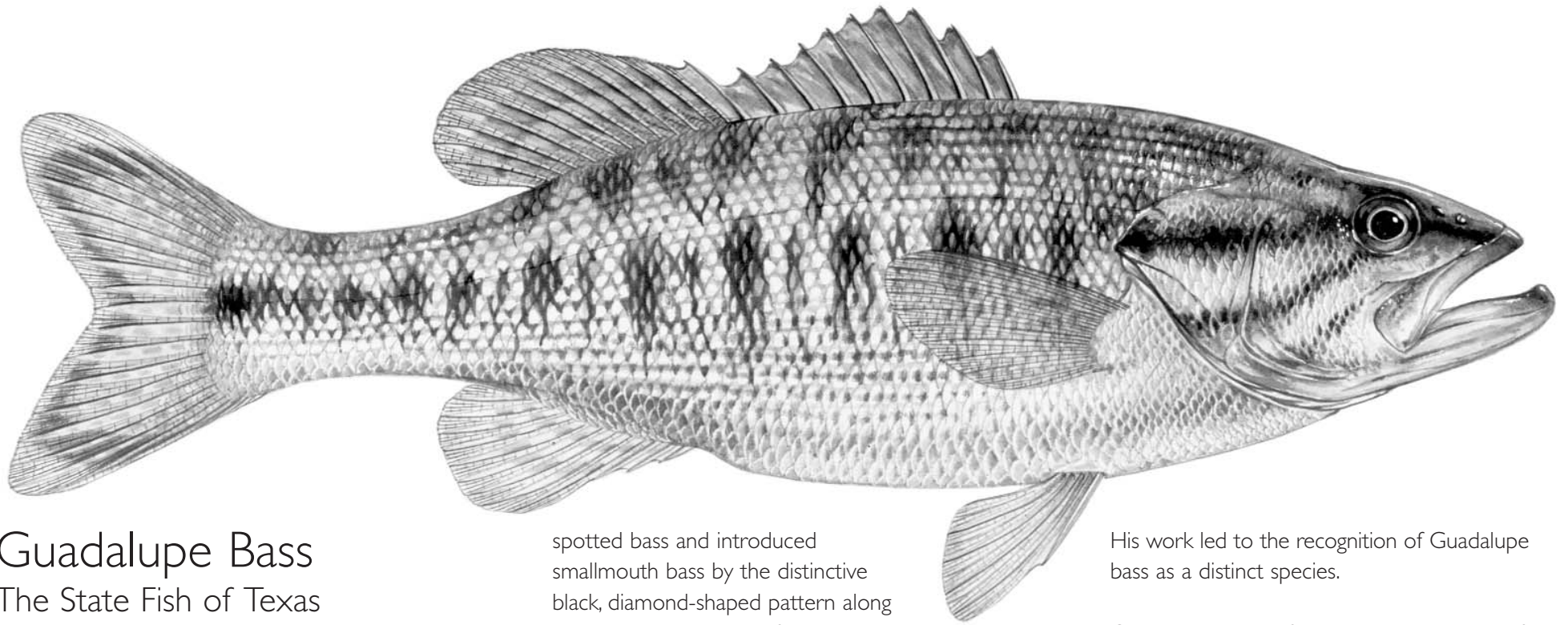


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The State Fish of Texas GUADALUPE BASS





Guadalupe Bass

The State Fish of Texas

By Dr. Gary P. Garrett

The Guadalupe bass (*Micropterus treculii*) is the official State Fish of Texas. A Hill Country native, it lives only in streams of the Edwards Plateau region of Central Texas. Because it is specialized for living in streams, it doesn't grow to huge sizes: the state record is 3 pounds, 11 ounces. However, it is a popular sport fish for anglers who enjoy pursuing a lively fish in attractive, natural settings.

The Guadalupe bass is one of our native species of black bass, a close relative of the largemouth and spotted basses. It can be distinguished from

spotted bass and introduced smallmouth bass by the distinctive black, diamond-shaped pattern along its sides and the rows of spots that form stripes on its belly. It differs from largemouth bass in having a smaller mouth, with the jaw not extending beyond its eye, and also in its choice of habitat. Largemouth bass thrive in deep, still pools. Guadalupe bass are adapted to flowing streams. Like other black basses, the Guadalupe bass eats fish, crayfish and insect larvae. Males build nests for spawning in early spring.

This species was originally described in the 1870s as a race of largemouth bass. Much later, it was reclassified as a form of spotted bass. In the early 1950s, Dr. Clark Hubbs of the University of Texas found Guadalupe and spotted bass living together in several streams.

His work led to the recognition of Guadalupe bass as a distinct species.

Guadalupe bass are found in the headwaters of the San Antonio, Guadalupe and Colorado river systems, as well as some tributaries of the Brazos River. In 1973, before the natural range of Guadalupe bass was well understood, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) introduced them into the headwaters of the Nueces River.

Because the fish had become established in the Nueces River system, in 1988 TPWD developed a Guadalupe bass refuge in the Sabinal River at Lost Maples State Natural Area in 1988. This location offers habitat similar to the natural environment of the bass and provides security for protection of the species. Facilities were developed to allow the public to see the fish and learn about the benefits of the program.